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3 Transcript of Proceedings
4 Salton Sea Species Conservation Habitat Project
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10 Wednesday, July 7, 2010
11 1:00 p.m.
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13 University of California Riverside
14 75-080 Frank Sinatra Drive, Room B200
15 Palm Desert, California
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19 Reported By:
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21 CSR No. 11598, CCR
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A P P E A R A N C E S

MODERATOR:

Rick Davis, The Davis Group

SPEAKER PANEL:

Rob Thomson, Entrix

Lanika Cervantes, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Arturo Delgado, California Department of Fish and Game

1 MR. DAVIS: There are cards here. I'd be happy
2 to walk around with them if you would like to speak.
3 Again, if you just want to do a written comment, those
4 forms are available as well and I'll have them. Why don't
5 we start with -- first speaker is Branka Lothrop from the
6 Coachella Valley Mosquito and Vector Control District, and
7 I'm sure I did your name no justice and I apologize.

8 MS. LOTHROP: Branka spelled with K, Lothrop, and
9 I am the general manager at Coachella Valley Mosquito and
10 Vector Control District. First of all, I want to thank
11 you for the opportunity to make our comments. I live in
12 this valley from 1992 and I was involved in all previous
13 Salton Sea Authority meetings. At that time I was a
14 vectorologist of the district and took the position of a
15 manager a year ago.

16 If you do not know, the district is in this
17 valley present from 1928. We are a special district and
18 the public health agency which is directly involved in
19 controlling mosquitos along with the other vectors,
20 ordinals and species. We have -- our concern is few a
21 mosquito species which are known as a vector of
22 arboviruses, West Nile synthroids and equine. All three
23 viruses are present in the valley for a long time and West
24 Nile was first detected in California at the south side of
25 the Salton Sea in 2003.

1 The major concern is our district has read this
2 project is that it's actually proposing an increase of
3 mosquito population by building the shallow ponds on the
4 north and south part of the Salton Sea which will provide
5 increased habitat for mosquito breeding. We are also
6 concerned with the fact that the proposed project did not
7 suggest measures for mitigating of the problem that will
8 affect public health caused by this increase of the
9 mosquito population.

10 I understand that the goal is to save the birds.
11 I understand as a biologist, that's my background, this
12 important Pacific flyway for the birds and I understand
13 the purpose. However, what I can -- as a district and the
14 manager of the district, what I cannot quite comprehend
15 here is that nobody considered potential public health
16 effect here. And this is not the first time that the
17 district is speaking about this. We send many letters and
18 make very similar public comments in the past.

19 West Nile virus is a very important public health
20 problem in North America. In the last ten years, Center
21 for Disease Control received close to 30,000 reports of
22 human disease cases. From those, 12,000 were central
23 nervous system disease cases. The rest were as a --
24 recognized as a West Nile fever or they were clinically
25 uncharacterized. However, from all these there are over

1 or close to 1200 that's caused by -- the deaths caused by
2 the west Nile virus.

3 Very important to know is that the most exposed
4 structure of the public is the elderly residents because
5 their immune system is run down and they are the ones
6 which actually end up with the fever or nervous system
7 disease.

8 The problem we see here, that at this point our
9 district is controlling about 50 to 70 acres of a natural
10 marshland around the Salton Sea, mostly in the North Shore
11 State Park and west shore of the Salton Sea. We are using
12 biorational products, which is very important to stress
13 here that those are natural products which are normally in
14 the ground, just formulated to be target specific.

15 At this point from June 8th, actually the first
16 positive mosquito pool was on May 20th and was down on
17 Vanderveer at Mack Avenue, close by, from that point and
18 moved all south of Mecca in the area of the -- actually,
19 currently towards Martinez Wetland, we just recently got
20 access to that wetland and we had from the 13 positive
21 mosquito pools, eight of them -- I'm sorry. Six of them
22 are coming from that area.

23 It is of our concern that a project like this do
24 not take potential effect on public health. They did not
25 really include our district as an agency that can help to

1 provide what are the best ways to mitigate that effect
2 because if you want to develop that area, if you want to
3 have any kind of recreation, if you want to have
4 residential area, you will have a problem with viruses
5 there. They are here for a long time and this is the
6 entry point for any new virus which can come through
7 United States.

8 west Nile first show on the east coast, travel
9 slowly and came to California through that gate of Pacific
10 flyway. The birds, natural reservoirs, and migratory
11 birds just moved in and all the vectors are present here.

12 The one thing which I notice on the latest
13 workshop on the Salton Sea was stated that mosquitos do
14 not breed in salt water. I understand in every book will
15 be a fresh water mosquito; however, they adapt itself to
16 35 and more PPT, which means it can go either way, and
17 it's very abundant in any of the marshes, natural marshes.

18 Man-made wetlands at the end overgrow with
19 vegetation and it's very well known that the vegetation
20 slow any water movement, turn into the stagnant even if
21 you do put the fish in because we use at this point
22 mosquitofish at the man-made habitats to control
23 mosquitos. The number of mosquitofish per acre has to be
24 so large to get any effect, and with birds being there,
25 you will be just providing a dessert for the birds, will

1 not really affect the mosquito control in the level which
2 is necessary. Our traps can collect up to three, four,
3 5,000, even more mosquitos.

4 So we have a board meeting on July 13 and we'll
5 provide to you the written comments as well. However, I
6 do need to get the consent from the board before I submit
7 that, but we did discuss this and they approved my
8 speaking here at this meeting.

9 We urge you to -- I will say one more time to be
10 more specific what type of the construction of a shallow
11 habitat pond you are making, really be aware that you are
12 increasing currently 50, 70 acres of productive mosquito
13 breeding habitats to probably ten times more.

14 Please consider possible measures of mitigating
15 that will affect public health costs by the increase of
16 mosquito population, and consider participation of local
17 health, vector control institutions as a consultant for
18 the proposed project. You will have the same problem in
19 Imperial County because usually we get positive first in
20 this area, that area there and then just move back to our
21 area. Thank you.

22 MR. DAVIS: Thank you for your comment. Next.

23 MR. MACE: If I -- if this is out of order, just
24 stop me. That's a great point and the Corps has worked
25 with vector control districts all across the state. The

1 bay area, we have a regional general permit for spraying
2 and they figured out a way to not impact the birds yet
3 still spray. So maybe we could incorporate some comments
4 with that permit, in our permit here since we already have
5 a template.

6 MS. LOTHROP: Unfortunately the public and maybe
7 the other organizations perceive vector control as a pest
8 control and we are quite different than pest control. We
9 do surveillance. We only treat for the reason and we use
10 biorational products, IGR, with proprias or using
11 mosquitofish when it's possible to do that. I would
12 rather have a desert pupfish than mosquitofish because
13 it's much better adopted and it's a much more aggressive
14 feeder on mosquito larvae.

15 However, I am not sure how that will be with the
16 Fish and Game. I tried to get permits to work with them
17 and breed some and we have a facility where we can produce
18 many pounds of desert pupfish you want to use for this
19 project, but unfortunately I was refused to get that
20 permit. So I just -- I left my card there. If you type
21 Coachella Valley Vector Control, you get all the
22 information on the website and please feel free to call.

23 MR. DAVIS: Thank you. Next speaker is Richard
24 B. Speed.

25 MR. SPEAK: I think I can speak loud enough that

1 you won't have any trouble hearing me. what you people
2 are doing here today is very admirable, but I have a
3 feeling that we are in a way either overlooking or
4 ignoring what I consider to be a much larger and much more
5 important issue. That is the future of the Salton Sea
6 itself.

7 You are concerning yourselves with one small
8 piece, but the larger issue is being ignored generally by
9 the public and it seems to me also by the State. If we
10 don't do something in the very near future, that sea is
11 going to vanish and we're going to have bigger problems
12 than the ones you're talking about here. I understand the
13 State doesn't have any money, neither does the federal
14 government, although they spread a lot of it around the
15 world without any concern about it.

16 Nevertheless, in some fashion and in some way
17 money needs to be found to do something about the recovery
18 of the Salton Sea.

19 MR. DAVIS: Thank you. David Novick, Friends of
20 Big Morongo Canyon Preserve.

21 MR. NOVICK: Thank you. My making any major
22 statement depends on an answer to a question I have. An
23 article appeared yesterday in the Desert Sun which
24 specifically talked about several test ponds that have
25 already been located. From the description of the

1 location, they seem to be within the boundaries of what
2 you're showing here. I'd like to ask if somebody could
3 clarify whether those test ponds are within those three
4 locations or not.

5 MR. DELGADO: My understanding is that they're
6 above minus G-28, so they would not be within the areas
7 that we're considering for placement of our project.

8 MR. NOVICK: So destruction of these ponds would
9 not put them -- well, destruction of the ponds would occur
10 because they're simply out of the boundaries that are
11 being looked at. In other words, the new ponds that would
12 be constructed are in different locations from the
13 existing ones simply because of the area.

14 MR. DELGADO: The project is currently being
15 administered by the Bureau of Reclamation, so that would
16 be a question best suited to be answered by the Bureau of
17 Reclamation. That's not a state project.

18 MR. NOVICK: I understand that, but if they're
19 within the area of boundaries that are going to be
20 utilized for this plan, I can't understand why the State
21 wouldn't temporarily leave them so they don't have to be
22 reconstructed, and that was simply the comment that I was
23 going to make since there's a lack of clarity as to, in my
24 mind, where they're specifically located, but you
25 indicated they're not within the areas. Then I assume any

1 further comments would be out of order at this time.

2 MR. DELGADO: Thank you

3 MR. DAVIS: I have no more speaker cards. A
4 couple of you did want to ask some questions afterwards I
5 already heard. Are there other questions that anyone
6 would like to pose, other comments you would like to make
7 for the record? Yes, sir.

8 MR. HAUGARD: Out of curiosity, is everything
9 that's being proposed funded?

10 MR. DAVIS: Do we need names for this?

11 MR. THOMSON: Yeah. Should.

12 MR. DAVIS: Would you mind stating your name for
13 me?

14 MR. HAUGARD: Larry Haugard, H-a-u-g-a-r-d. My
15 question is is all of this funded through 2012 that you're
16 talking about?

17 MR. DELGADO: My understanding of our current
18 budget situation is that we believe we have sufficient
19 funding available to construct the proposed acreage.

20 MR. SPEAK: What's the cost?

21 MR. DELGADO: We are still looking at that. We
22 are -- we haven't -- the final costs can't be estimated
23 until we actually go through this whole environmental
24 review process, complete our design work, so that's really
25 going to dictate how much the total cost is going to be

1 for the project.

2 MR. DAVIS: Other comments or questions?

3 MR. WALKER: Mike Walker with Bureau of
4 Reclamation. Just to clarify what the gentleman said
5 about ponds, existing ponds being destroyed, that's not
6 true. They're not going to be destroyed. The ponds will
7 still be there. The pumps are going to be turned off.

8 MR. STEVENS: And the mosquito problem there?

9 MR. WALKER: Not that I know of. No. Turn the
10 pumps off so the water won't be in there anymore. There
11 isn't one now either because of the salinity.

12 MR. STEVENS: How are we going to find out how to
13 get the water level up, bigger picture like the man said?

14 MR. WALKER: Depends on the design.

15 MR. STEVENS: I'm not talking about the pond, I'm
16 talking about the whole lake. Is there any big plans?

17 MR. DAVIS: Would you mind stating your name for
18 the record, sir?

19 MR. STEVENS: Trevor Stevens. Resident of Salton
20 City.

21 MR. DELGADO: I think we kind of addressed that
22 in the presentation earlier. We -- currently there's been
23 no direction provided by the legislature. We're only
24 authorized to move forward with what we're proposing
25 today. So we haven't been given authority to move forward

1 with a restoration program, a whole sea restoration
2 program.

3 MR. DAVIS: Why don't you talk about the PEIR.

4 MR. DELGADO: Chuck, you would probably be best
5 suited. Go ahead and take a stab at it.

6 MR. KEENE: Chuck Keene from the Department of
7 Water Resources. The State has proposed a restoration of
8 the sea. It's not a full sea restoration because of lack
9 of water that's ultimately going to flow into the sea.
10 There will be a smaller sea, so the State's proposal is
11 just similar to the Salton Sea Authority's initial
12 proposal of one of basically partitioning the sea into
13 different segments. How you partition it, you know,
14 depends on who you talk to, what would be the best
15 configuration, but that partition type of a proposal is
16 consistent with the lack of inflows that you're going to
17 see in the future coming into the Salton Sea. You're not
18 going to have a full Salton Sea because the inflows don't
19 warrant that. So the State as well as the federal
20 government as well as the Salton Sea Authority have
21 proposed what they call partial sea restoration projects,
22 and that's the type of project that the State's proposed
23 earlier that's still under consideration by the
24 legislature is addressing.

25 MR. SPEED: Can I comment again?

1 MR. DAVIS: Sure.

2 MR. SPEED: What the gentleman just said,
3 wouldn't it be more suitable to try to recover the entire
4 Salton Sea rather than just a piece of it by importing
5 water from the Sea of Cortez, what's called the Sea to Sea
6 project? I know that is not part of what the State is
7 considering, but it would seem to me a far better solution
8 to the entire problem and one which would I think satisfy
9 almost everyone in the area, whereas the solution you are
10 proposing or the State is proposing meets with resistance
11 from every area in this area. Nobody likes it.

12 MR. KEENE: I don't want to spend too much time
13 addressing those specific issues because that's not the
14 purpose of this meeting, but just suffice to say that the
15 full sea restoration project was considered as part of the
16 State's Programmatic Environmental Impact Report.

17 We did discuss importing water from the Sea of
18 Cortez, from the Pacific Ocean, through water reclamation
19 and various other different means. Desalination is
20 another aspect that we looked at as well.

21 All those alternatives just don't pencil out.
22 The Sea of Cortez proposal as laid out right now would
23 probably cost on the order of \$60 to \$70 billion.

24 MR. SPEED: I disagree.

25 MR. KEENE: This is not just the State's

1 determination or recommendation. The federal government
2 has also looked at that alternative and come up with
3 similar results. The Salton Sea Authority once looked at
4 that alternative and came up with similar results. So
5 this has well been vetted and we fully understand how the
6 citizens around the sea would like to see a full sea, but
7 you know, there is a tremendous cost involved in moving
8 that water, and the bottom line is that's not going to
9 solve the problems for the Salton Sea.

10 The Salton Sea, if you bring in sea water, it
11 will only get saltier. It's already salty enough. It's a
12 matter of salt loading. You can't get rid of the salts in
13 the salt in the sea unless you have a pump vac system,
14 which just doubles the cost of the project again.

15 Again, I don't want to belabor the point, but the
16 full argument in favor of a whole sea restoration was
17 fully vetted in the programmatic Environmental Impact
18 Report.

19 MR. DAVIS: Other comments? Any other comments
20 for the record, questions?

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Is there a website or
22 anything about getting sea water to the Salton Sea? Is
23 there any other organization interested in doing this from
24 the ocean like a pipeline to the sea?

25 MR. DAVIS: Not aware of.

1 MR. KEENE: The programmatic environmental
2 document that discusses that option is available on the
3 same website that was previously Department of Water
4 Resources website. To my knowledge, right now nobody is
5 actively looking at a sea-to-sea-type proposal except for
6 one organization. It's called the Sea to Sea
7 organization. I think we have a few representatives or
8 people that are interested in that in the audience today
9 and they're looking at those types of possibilities, but I
10 think ultimately they'll arrive at the same type of an
11 issue where there's -- it is a very costly endeavor.

12 MR. DELGADO: I think it's important to emphasize
13 a point that we work at the discretion of the Governor and
14 legislature and we have not been given authority to move
15 on a whole sea restoration program. This is the only
16 authority we have now is the project we're proposing
17 today. So until we get direction, it's kind of like you
18 can't kind of supercede the authority of your boss.
19 You've got to do what your boss tells you to do. So this
20 is all we're allowed to do at this time.

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Are you guys funded
22 through the State?

23 MR. DELGADO: I work for the Department of Fish
24 and Game and our federal partner is the Army Corps of
25 Engineers.

1 MR. DAVIS: Yes, sir. Please state your name if
2 you wouldn't mind.

3 MR. GREEN: Bill Green with the Valley Action
4 Group, and just to answer this gentleman's question, there
5 is a website for interested parties to what's going on and
6 if you go www.SaltonSeaStakeholders.com and they'll be
7 posting periodically updates.

8 MR. SPEED: Where are you located? Where is your
9 office?

10 MR. GREEN: In Palm Desert.

11 MR. DAVIS: Other questions, public comment?
12 Okay. Well, we will be happy to answer questions if you
13 have them after the meeting, just one-on-one up here for a
14 few minutes and we really appreciate your attendance. As
15 we noted earlier, there are three other meetings, one in
16 Thermal, one in Calipatria and one in Brawley. They were
17 all part of the announcement to you. So thank you for
18 your attendance and we'll see you at future meetings, we
19 hope.

20 (Proceedings concluded at 1:50 p.m.)
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REPORTER'S CERTIFICATION

I, Terri L. Emery, Certified Shorthand Reporter,
in and for the State of California, do hereby certify:

That the foregoing proceedings were taken before me
at the time and place herein set forth; that the
proceedings were reported stenographically by me and
later transcribed into typewriting under my direction;
that the foregoing is a true record of the proceedings
taken at that time.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have subscribed my name this
16th day of July, 2010.

Terri L. Emery, CSR No. 11598, CCR